

SPEECH

OF

HIS HONOR LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR SCHULTZ,

ON THE OCCASION OF HIS

UNVEILING THE MONUMENT

ERECTED BY THE MANITOBA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NEAR THE
OLD KING'S HIGHWAY, TO COMMEMORATE THE

Battle of Seven Oaks.

19TH JUNE, 1891.

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The Manitoba Historical Society, who erected the monument, chose as its site a beautiful spot bordering on the Old Kings Highway, a rifle shot or so north of the Winnipeg City Limits.

From the Free Press of 18th June, 1894.

MR. PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

You have heard from authoritative sources to-day all that relates to the monument before us, and upon that subject I need not touch; but the present seems to me to be an occasion when we should all acknowledge the value of the services which have been rendered to the people of this Province and of the Dominion by the Historical Society of Manitoba; and it is to their great credit that what we see to-day is only one of the many instances I might refer to, where their aid has been of the greatest value in giving permanency to those portions of the history of this country which, already dimmed by time in the memories of living men, are in danger of passing into the realm of vague tradition, or of being wholly lost.

I have been requested by the President and Council of this Society, on the anniversary of the event, to unveil the monument which commemorates it; and while there may be differences of opinion as to the causes which led to the combat and loss of life these stones record, yet everyone present who is familiar with the early history of this country will agree with me that, even apart entirely from these events, this monument stands upon historic ground, and the Society, in determining the site to mark the battle of Seven Oaks, which extended from the grove which gave it its name to near Fort Douglas, was wise, I think, in placing it near this great highway, which traversing as it does this Province from north to south and east to west, is but the enlargement of the trail which connected the great northern waters and woods, the home of the Chippewyan and Cree, with the vast prairies of the south and west, where dwelt, differing in dialect only, the divisions of that great and warlike nation, the Dakotahs. I have said that this road,

whether as Indian trail or King's Highway, in old or more recent times, is indeed historic. Over it, in the dim past which antedates even Indian tradition, must have passed these aboriginal inhabitants whose interesting sepulchral remains near St. Andrew's Rapids and elsewhere, excite wonder and stimulate conjecture, and show them to have been of a race superior in many respects to those which succeeded them. Over this road and near this spot must have passed the war parties of the Assiniboines in their futile effort to oppose with arrow, tomahawk and spear, the invading northern and eastern Cree, who had doubtless, when similarly armed, envied in vain the warlike "Stoney" his possession of what was later known as the Image and White Horse Plains, with their countless herds of Bison; and when the earlier possession of fire-arms gave the Cree the ascendancy he sought, and that dread scourge the small-pox, had thinned the Assiniboine ranks, it must have been along this great trail they retreated towards the blue hills of Brandon and to the upper waters of the river which still bears their name. La Verandrye, the first white man who looked on this fair land, must have seen this spot and passed by this trail, and while it was yet a bridle path or cart track, and long before it was known, as it afterwards became, the King's Highway, men who were great in their day and generation and are deservedly still remembered for their important discoveries and their administrative abilities have trodden the path which lies at our feet. Over it has passed discoverer, courier, missionary, arctic voyager, chief, warrior and medicineman, governor, factor, judge, councillor and commander; along it has been carried wampum and tomahawk, message of peace and war. It has heard the rumble of artillery and the steady march of the Sixth of the Line, the Royal Canadian, and the 60th Rifles; and along its course the hard-pressed founders of the Selkirk Settlement alternately struggled southwards in search of food or hurried northward for safety with steps of fear. Over it have travelled the pioneer priests, ministers and bishops of the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and Wesleyan churches. The governors of the Hudsons Bay Company have, as well as the lieutenants

of the governors of the Dominion of Canada, all passed this way. Truly this is an historic place; and from the spot where I now stand could once have been seen nearly all of the old historic strongholds of the Hudson Bay, the Northwest and the X. Y. companies. From it may still be seen places made memorable by the good works of the Rev. Mr. West, Bishops Anderson and Provencher, the Rev. John Black and other devoted men; within view are the residences of Hon. John Inkster, the father of our worthy sheriff, a member of the old Council of Assiniboia, and that of my brave and valued old friend, Hon. Robert McBeth, also a member of the Council, and the father of the President of our Historical Society, whose instincts of hospitality were not to be thwarted by the knowledge that confiscation and worse might follow his shelter of a hard-hunted friend; and I see all around me here worthy children of such worthy sires, the descendants of those pioneer Selkirk settlers, whose tale of sorrow, suffering and danger always evokes sympathy and wonder. Mr. President, we are, if I mistake not, near the place where the first plow turned the first furrow—presage of peace, plenty and prosperity—on the eastern verge of that vast prairie which extends to the Rocky Mountains: and having suitably marked the scene of battle, let us bury with the foundations of this monument the feuds, jealousies and strifes of the past which it recalls, and remembering that English and Irish, Scandinavian, German and the descendants of the gallant Gauls and Gaels, as well as those of mixed blood, who have figured so prominently in the annals of this country, are now by the mandate of our Queen, of one country and one people, and while still heirs of the unsullied patriotism and the invincible courage of our colonial and provincial ancestry, and proud of the heroic past, wherein English vied with French in the defence of their common country, we are Canadians all, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and we may look forward with that hope which is justified by the immensity and value of our resources, by the law-abiding, moral and religious character of our people. If we be true to our God and ourselves in the great trust He has imposed upon us, endeavoring to avoid those strifes of race and creed, which it was a great part

of the life work of the great Canadian who now, amid the sorrow of the nation, sleeps with his fathers at Cataragui, to reconcile, we may be the builders of a nation forming part of an empire greater than any the world has yet seen, and upon this continent to be a Canadian citizen may be even a prouder boast than was that of the citizen of an ancient empire, less great than is ours now, "Civis Romanus sum." Mr. President, I have spoken too long, and will now proceed to execute the duty with which your council has entrusted me; and in the name of the contributors to this memorial, in the name of the president, officers and members of the Historical Society of Manitoba, I unveil this monument, which marks the scene of the battle of Seven Oaks, in the hope that when these rocks are seen from the historic path near which it has been placed, and from the railway which passes close by, types in themselves of the change from the old to the new, it will be remembered that as nature has clothed with verdure this spot, once wet with blood, so should we, except as matters of historic interest and record, clothe with forgetfulness all animosities, jealousies, bitternesses and strifes, and turning to the fair prospects before us as an united people and nation, thank Almighty God that the sad past is indeed past, and implore His blessing upon our efforts for a brighter future.

At the close of his remarks His Honor unveiled the monument, the act being greeted with general applause. The monument is of native Selkirk stone, and the workmanship a credit to the designer, Mr. S. Hooper. It stands nine feet six inches in height and its size is four feet at the base. On the top is carved a wreath of flowers. The inscription is on the west side, facing Main street. On the upper portion are carved the words "Seven Oaks": and beneath is the inscription, "Erected in 1891 by the Manitoba Historical Society, through the generosity of the Countess of Selkirk, on the site of Seven Oaks, where fell Governor Robert Semple and twenty of his officers and men, June 19th, 1816."

NOTE.—The Secretary, Mr. Chas. N. Bell, gave an able historical account of the Battle and excellent speeches were made by the President, Mr. John McBeth, by Honorable Mr. Justice Dubuc, Honorable J. W. Taylor, U. S. Consul, Rev. Canon Matheson and Col. Villiers, D. A. G.